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ABSTRACT

Based on the idea that children can learn to write letters to friends and relatives as soon as they learn to write words, this visually oriented pamphlet presents practical classroom activities that primary grade teachers can use to encourage their young students to practice letter writing skills. The pamphlet contains instructions for making a class letterbox, along with illustrations on how to "disguise" or decorate the letterbox according to the holiday being celebrated or the season of the year. Also included in the pamphlet are ideas on whom to write letters to, hints on what to write, and advice on how to make letters interesting. The last page of the pamphlet is in the form of an aerogram on which the children can write an address and a message to a friend, representing a definite progression from the first page which contains a postcard that needed only the name of the recipient, the date, and the signature of the sender. (NKA)

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# WHEN TO START?

• Preferably, the first day of school or at least today!

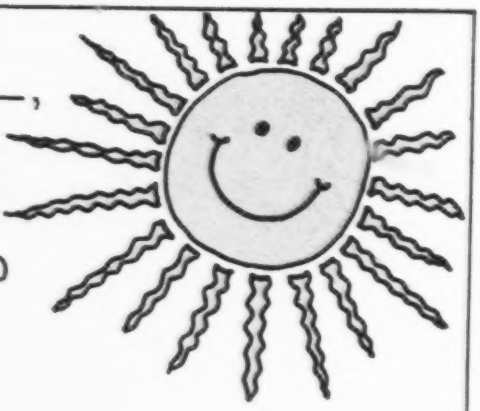
**HOW?** Like this! Photocopy a positive postcard for every child.

Dear _____,

I'm glad you're in my class. You brighten up my day!

From _____

Signed _____ Date



• Fill in the missing details and put the postcards into colourful envelopes clearly marked with each child's first name. (A bright sticker posted beside the name will add interest too.) Now, give all the children their names printed clearly on separate cards and ask them to match the names to one on an envelope. You might divide the children and the envelopes into groups so that the task isn't so daunting.

• Play games which involve letters. Remember the old English rhyme that begins 'I wrote a letter to my love and on the way I dropped it'? Sit the children in a circle and off you go!

• Keep a special permanent spot for letters (messages) you may like to leave for the class. These could be items of news, jokes, poems, etc.

• Make a class letter box - let your kids help. (See overleaf.)

• And don't forget - some time during the year find time to visit your local Post Office.

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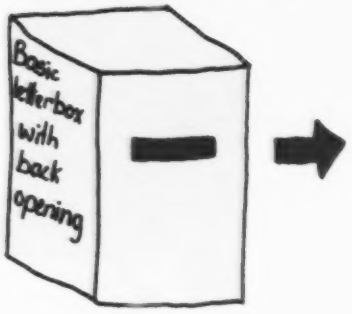
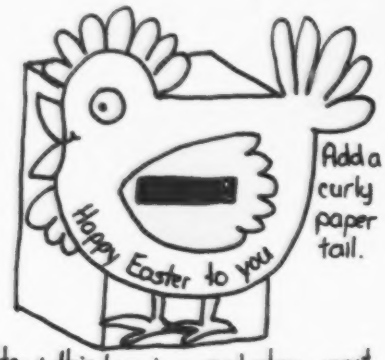
# LETTERBOX DISGUISES

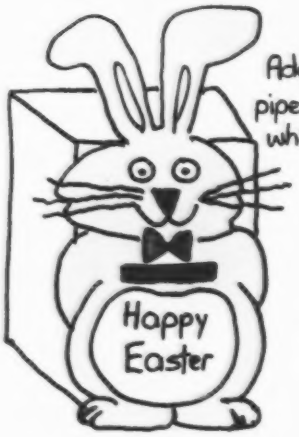
• Make your classroom letterbox a focal point throughout the year. With the addition of simple cardboard cut-outs, its 'face' can be altered to suit all kinds of occasions.



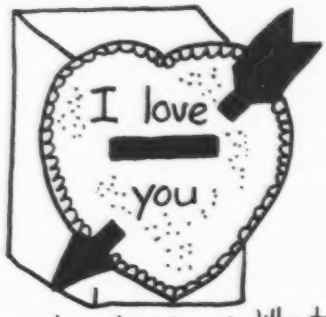



Add a curly paper tail.

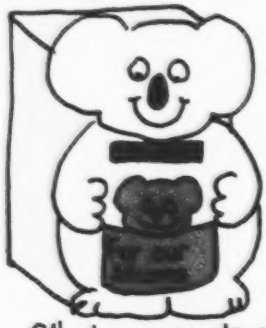
Stand this box in a real straw nest.



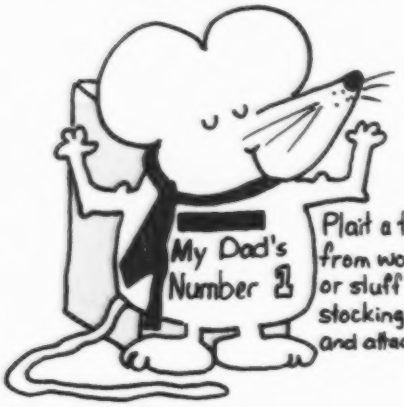

Add pipe cleaner whiskers.




Paste on lace, braid and glitter trims.



Attach a separate pouch and slide baby koala inside.




Plait a tail from wool or stuff a stocking and attach.

Allow triangular teeth to protrude over posting hole.

Add woolly or curly paper hair.

Cover your letterbox to look like a Christmas parcel.

Paste on cotton wool whiskers and hat trims.

Dear Cloud,
I like the soft, fluffy shapes you make and the way you slip silently through my sky.
Love Mal

Dear Nasty Dog,
I HATE the way you bark at me and make me cry. I won't hurt you.
From Clare
Grrr!

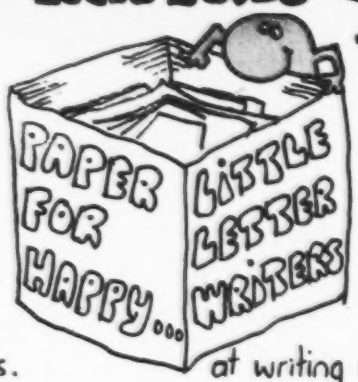
...you see, and I'd just like to know why we can't have more and more and more stories....

...and frustrations

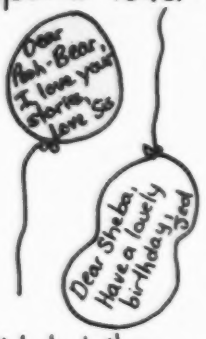
Letters can flow like poems.....and help overcome fears.....

# MAKE LETTER WRITING INTERESTING...

- Write on pink paper, blue paper, spotted paper, blotting paper, toilet paper, black paper, crinkly paper, any kind of paper! Store it all in a large, decorated and labelled box, kept in a special letter-writing corner.

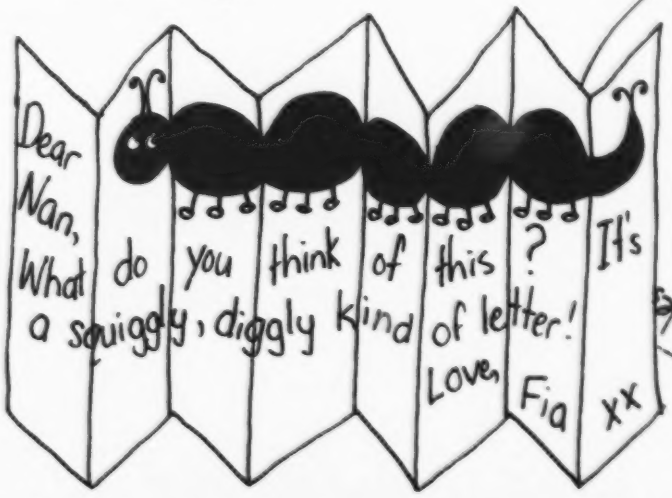


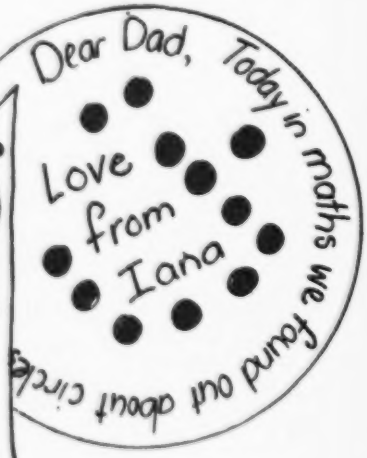

- Create a special letter-writing corner - fill it with cushions, pencils, crayons, scissors, texta pens, paper, etc. Provide a few simple picture dictionaries and word lists for the youngest writers. Do not deter the slightest attempts at writing no matter how unintelligible.
- The kids can be thinking about what to write, selecting old cards to cut up, or drawing the special pictures they will take home proudly to Mums, while waiting for you to come and help write the messages.




- Blow up balloons. Write the children's dictated messages on them, using texta pens. Encourage the children to sign their own names.

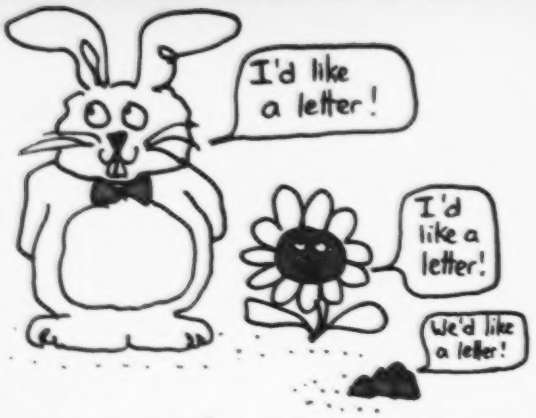
- Write letters on special shaped pages.




'Sir, more than kisses, letters mingle souls;
For thus friends absent speak.' -John Donne 1633

# WHO TO WRITE TO?




- Family - Mum, Dad, Grandma, Auntie, sisters, brothers, Uncle Tom Cobley and all!
- School - your teacher, principal, best friend, tuck shop assistant, prefects, caretaker, the tree in the playground.
- Characters from storybooks - the big bad wolf, the three little pigs, any of the witches, kings, princesses and dragons that prowl the pages.
- Anything or anyone in the local environment (whether animate or inanimate doesn't matter; it all helps creative thought). For instance: the library, the swimming pool, the dog out in the street that terrifies you, the clouds, the river, the elderly pensioners down the road, etc.
- Imaginary folk - the toothfairy, Santa Claus, the Easter bunny or chicken, Halloween nasties, the bogey man, TV heroes and heroines, etc.
- People who 'evolve' from thematic language units - police, dentists, nurses, doctors, life-savers, ambulance drivers, bakers, musicians, garbage collectors, etc.

# WHAT TO WRITE (with a little help from a scribe)

Dear Mr Wolf,
My piglets have told me you want to huff and puff their little house down. I would like to see you first.
Love,
Old Mother Sow

Dear Old Mother Sow,
I promise I won't wreck your piglets' house. May I wreck yours instead?
Love,
Mr Wolf
from Wicked Demolitions Co.

With the help of an adult, lots of fun can be had compiling all kinds of letters. Many, like these between the wolf and Old Mother Sow, have endless potential.

Use traditional stories to help motivate letter writing.....

OR

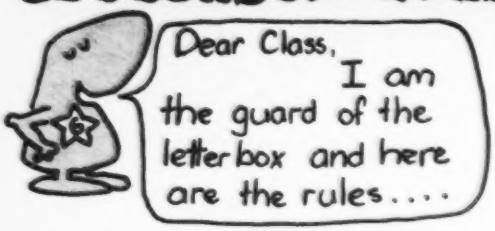
Dear Mum,
Hey! Did you know it's spring?
Love,
Lionel Xx

Dear Simi,
What's big and round and hairy?
Your head!
from
Peta

Recycle old unforn envelopes. Paste a clean piece of paper over the old address and write the new receiver's name on it. Post in the letterbox.

Relate letters to themes... share riddles and pictures....

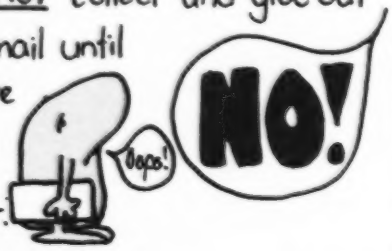
# LETTERBOX RULES



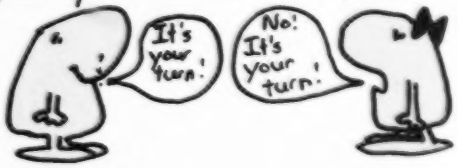

**1** Only the postie is allowed to open this letterbox.

**2** The postie can check the mail every single day.

**3** Do not collect and give out the mail until you've asked the teacher.




**4** Every week we have a new postie.




**5** To be a postie, you must wear a special badge.

THE END

(By order of the Letterbox Guard.)

•Copy this set of rules and enjoy reading and discussing them with your class. Stick them up beside the letterbox.

Tips for letterbox use:

- Make an event out of opening the letterbox, particularly on special days. Ask your class to help you make up tricky chants, rhymes or tongue-twisters. Recite them as the postie (complete with badge) dramatically shakes the box. Try these:

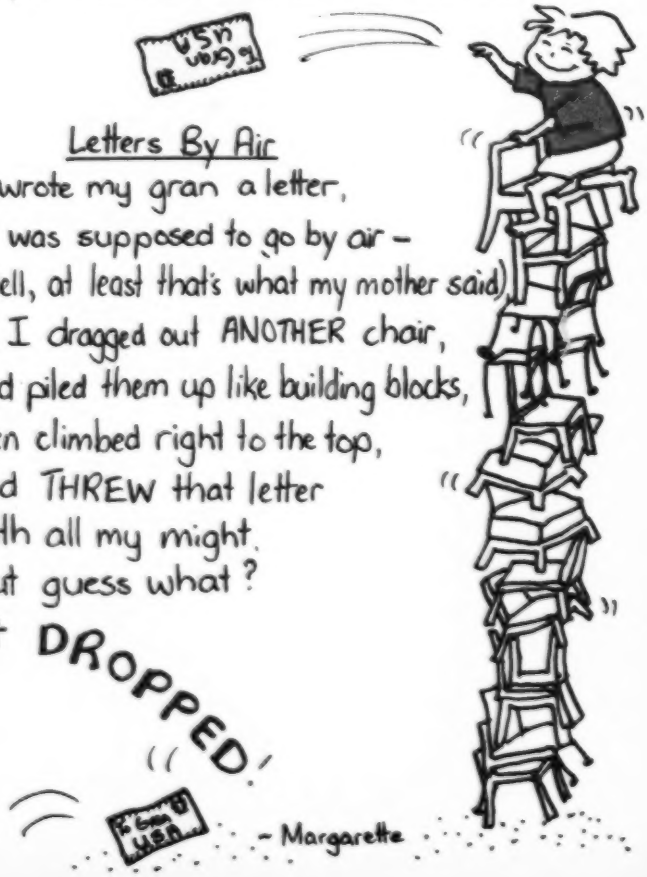
| | |
|---|---|
| Abracadabra | Letterbox, letterbox, |
| One two three | What's in your tummy? |
| Tumble out letters | Letterbox, letterbox, |
| All over me. | I hear something funny! |

- Encourage predictions. How many letters will be in the box? Who could they be for? Why is it so full? When will the letters be delivered? etc.
- Capitalise on days when the letterbox is empty. Feign horror or disappointment. Ask the children to suggest what could fill a hungry letterbox. Some may like to 'post' special drawings addressed to their Mums or Dads, or pieces of writing that you have scribed for them. The postie can distribute these at home-time.



## Letters By Air

I wrote my gran a letter,
It was supposed to go by air –
(Well, at least that's what my mother said)
So I dragged out ANOTHER chair,
And piled them up like building blocks,
Then climbed right to the top,
And THREW that letter
With all my might.
But guess what?
It **DROPPED!**



– Margarette

•Photocopy this for your class - your own aerogram to send to someone special.

Fold here

Fold here

Stick stamp right here.

To: _____

_____

_____

_____

Fold here

This letter will brighten up your day!

Fold here

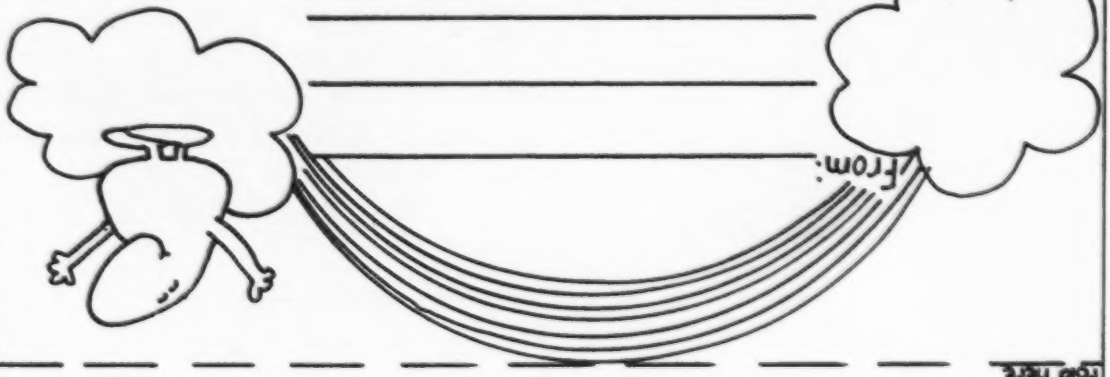
Positive, positive, don't be slow,
Be like Superbird and go, go, go!

_____

_____

_____

From: _____



Fold here

And, when the long year comes to a close, post all your children a goodbye letter, or perhaps a positive postcard, wishing them well for the year ahead.



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